



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Commerce, Science, and Transportation

TED STEVENS, Chairman
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PRESS RELEASE

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Senate Pipeline Inspection, Protection, Enforcement, and Safety Act of 2006

The bill reauthorizes the pipeline safety programs of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) for fiscal Years 2007 through 2010, consistent with the Administration's proposal.

Highlights of the bill include:

Increased DOT's Resources Dedicated to Overseeing Pipeline Safety

The bill provides an additional 45 federal inspectors (a 50% increase) over the four years of the bill at a cost of \$6 million in Fiscal Year 2010. Currently PHMSA has 90 inspectors, but the Inspector General has stated in the past that these relatively low staffing levels are a matter for concern. 90 inspectors translate to one inspector for every 18,000 miles of pipeline in this country.

Strengthened Programs to Reduce Construction Related Damage to Pipelines

The bill includes new civil enforcement authority against excavators and pipeline operators responsible for third-party damage incidents and provides grants to states that have damage prevention programs in place. Construction related damage, such as damage caused by excavation for a highway project, is the greatest source of pipeline accidents that result in death or injury. This occurs most often on the distribution systems that run through the neighborhoods where people live and work. These incidents have increased by 49 percent since 1996.

Applying DOT Safety Standards to the Currently Unregulated Low Stress Pipelines

On August 31, the Department of Transportation announced proposed rules to cover low stress pipelines in unusually sensitive areas. Pipeline operators will have to meet new safety requirements, including cleaning and continuous monitoring, along more than 1,200 miles of pipelines. However, low-stress lines that aren't in such sensitive areas would continue to be unregulated. The draft bill goes further than the draft regulation and requires DOT oversight of all low-stress pipelines.

Increased Accountability of Pipeline Company Officials

The bill includes a provision that would require senior officials at pipeline companies to certify that the information they are providing to regulators is accurate.

Enhanced Pipeline Research

The bill would also boost PHMSA's research and technology development budget to for pipeline safety issues such as corrosion by \$10 million over the length of the bill.

A Study of Pipelines Critical to Energy Supply

The bill includes a study of oil pipelines that are critical to the nation's energy supply in order to determine if there are sufficient safety regulations in place to ensure their safety.